

Leon Panetta and the Center for Strategic and International Studies have turned to her as an expert and adviser, because she knows that we can't protect ourselves at home without a robust strategy abroad.

Throughout her career, she has proven to be a pragmatic and solutions-focused public servant by working across the aisle and with stakeholders from different States and industries in the United States to find ways to protect our oceans and our ocean economy.

After the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, Monica collaborated with five Republican Governors of affected States to get \$1 billion in restoration funds from oil company BP so that States could quickly stop rebounding from the disaster.

Her work at NOAA was praised by groups like the Seafood Harvesters of America, who support her experience and legacy of protecting our oceans and the workers and communities that depend upon them.

Louis Pasteur once said:

Science knows no country, because knowledge belongs to humanity, and is the torch which illuminates the world. Science is the highest personification of the nation because that nation will remain the first which carries the furthest the works of thought and intelligence.

Monica Medina has dedicated her career to promoting America's excellence in these two realms—the tools of science and the values of humanity—because it is there where America's promise to the world can be found.

I want to reiterate very strongly that she has served every mission, she has fulfilled every goal that she has been given, and every discussion that she has ever had has always resulted in people holding us in the highest regard by the key stakeholders in every issue she has touched. I want to reiterate my strong support for her nomination and hope my colleagues will join me in confirming her for this important position.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

#### ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent, notwithstanding rule XXII, that upon the use or yielding back of time on the Donfried nomination, the Senate vote on the motions to invoke cloture on the Medina, Phee, Robinson, and Lewis nominations; that if closure is invoked on any of the nominations listed, all postcloture time be considered expired and the vote on confirmation of those nominations occur at a time and in an order to be determined by the majority leader, following consultation with the Republican leader, with 1 hour for debate equally divided prior to each vote, and the Republican debate be controlled by Senator CRUZ.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MURPHY. For the information of the Senate, we expect four rollcall

votes beginning at around 8 p.m. Those votes will be cloture on the Medina, Phee, Robinson, and Lewis nominations.

#### NOMINATIONS

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I am glad that we are coming to some conclusion this evening with respect to a handful of the long list of pending nominations for the State Department and the Department of Defense, but it is a small portion of a list that is growing bigger and bigger.

Never before has a first-term President had this few national security nominees in place by the fall of his first year. And this is a growing national security crisis imposed on the country by Republicans who have decided to put their hatred of Democrats and this President ahead of the security of this country—above the security of this Nation.

And it just takes a lot of hutzpah for my colleagues to stand here on the floor and criticize the President's conduct of foreign policy at the same time that they are refusing to allow the President to have staff to conduct foreign policy. Let me say that again. We have all sorts of Republicans coming down here and savaging the President's policy on Afghanistan or on China or on Russia, but then, at the exact same time, taking extraordinary steps to prevent the President from having anybody actually implement policies toward Afghanistan or Russia or China. It is akin to standing up in a restaurant and complaining about how slow the service is right after you went and barricaded the doors in and out of the kitchen.

My colleagues can't have it both ways. If you want to complain about the President's policies toward China, then stop standing in the way of allowing him to have personnel that can execute on sound policy. Stop standing in the way of the Assistant Secretary who will oversee policy in the region.

You have complaints about Afghanistan. Then why are we continuing to block those who would be in charge of refugee policy and in charge of resettlement policy to get more Afghans out of the country?

You have complaints about Russia. Well, for a month Republicans have been blocking the key personnel who oversee policy toward Russia, whether it be the Assistant Secretary for Europe or our Ambassador to NATO.

Here is what voters are left to wonder: Are these sincere objections based upon policy or is this really about an intentional effort to try to undermine the security of this country in order to damage Joe Biden?

I don't know the answer to that question, but I can't figure out any plausible reason how this benefits the country. Never before—never before—has a minority gone to these lengths to try to undermine a President's national security team.

Every single Democrat had massive objections, moral and practical, to

President Trump's foreign policy, but not a single one of us contemplated doing what our Republican colleagues are doing right now—holding up every single one of Donald Trump's Ambassadors and nominees—because we knew that that would undermine the security of the country, because there are differences that we have, but there are far more points of agreement where midlevel civil servants and Ambassadors are carrying out policies on behalf of America that Republicans and Democrats agree on.

Here is the list of nominees that are stuck. What does the Chief of Protocol have to do with Nord Stream 2? What does the Ambassador to Vietnam have to do with the objections of the Senator from Texas over an oil pipeline? Why are we blocking the Assistant Administrator for the U.S. Agency for International Development?

Nothing that is happening here has anything to do with the security of this country.

So I am glad we are unlocking a handful of nominees, but we are going to be here on Thursdays and Fridays and Saturdays and Sundays. I am going to advocate that we stay as long as it takes in order to protect this country, in order to stop this unprecedented blockade of the people who do the work of standing up for the security of this Nation every single day.

One of the critiques that has been lodged here today is about the President's proposal and his execution of his proposal to wind down the 20-year war in Afghanistan. In fact, one of my colleagues said that until the Secretary of State resigns, he will continue to block all Department of Defense and State Department nominees, knowing that that is not going to happen.

So I do want to spend a few minutes this evening talking about the real story behind President Biden's decision to bring a 20-year war that has cost this country \$2 trillion, has cost this Nation thousands of lives, and has ended up in hundreds of thousands of Afghans being killed—let's just be very clear at the outset. President Biden's decision to bring U.S. troops home from Afghanistan is wildly popular—supported by three out of four Americans. And I want to talk about the danger of what has happened over the course of the last 2 months with this critique of the President's withdrawal plan. Some of it is legitimate, but some of it is really dangerous.

So, in 2009, President Obama planned to send a whole bunch of additional troops into Afghanistan. It was Obama's surge—the idea that we would plus-up our troops there. We would partner with diplomats and aid administrators. It was a means to try to conquer and then hold territory in Afghanistan that had been taken by the Taliban.

It was a really good plan. It had all kinds of counterinsurgency buzz words. The PowerPoint looked really sharp. And it was endorsed by a lot of smart